

## **Blackmore to serve as medical director of Milligan PA program**

MILLIGAN COLLEGE, Tenn. (August 18, 2016) —Several new faculty have joined the ranks of Milligan College's new physician assistant program, including Johnson City physician and 1988 Milligan alum Dr. Ron Blackmore, who will serve part-time as medical director.

Launching in January 2018, Milligan's Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (M.S.P.A.S.) program will be a 28-month, 108 credit hour program projected to have 60 students when fully-enrolled, 25 graduates annually, filling a much-needed gap in healthcare employment regionally and nationally.

Blackmore currently serves as a family physician at Blue Ridge Family Medicine and as chairman of the board of State of Franklin Healthcare Associates in Johnson City. Blackmore received his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Missouri Columbia School of Medicine and a Bachelor of Science in biology from Milligan. In addition, he has served on numerous international mission trips.

Heather Carlson Justice will serve as assistant professor of physician assistant studies. She currently works in the Wellmont Health System as a PA in palliative care, with previous experience in the area of oncology. Justice has participated in free clinics in the U.S. and traveled internationally on medical mission trips. She holds a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Practice from the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science and a Bachelor of Science in biology from Taylor University.

Maureen Knechtel also will serve as assistant professor of physician assistant studies. Knechtel previously worked as a cardiology physician assistant at the Wellmont Cardiovascular Associates Heart Institute and was assistant professor at the Lincoln Memorial University-Debusk College of Osteopathic Medicine PA program. She has received both an M.P.A.S. and a Bachelor of Science in health science from Duquesne University. In addition, Knechtel does volunteer work at Covenant Presbyterian Church as well as for area children's charities.

"These faculty bring to the classroom strong credentials and a wide variety of professional experience, including family medicine, palliative care, oncology, cardiology and dermatology," said Dr. Garland Young, Milligan's vice president for academic affairs. "They are also strongly committed Christians who are eager to incorporate their Christian worldview into PA education."

Milligan's PA program director is Andrew Hull, a 2001 Milligan graduate and certified physician assistant at Tri-Cities Skin and Cancer in Johnson City. He has a wide range of medical experience working locally as a physician assistant in areas including dermatology, family practice and emergency room medicine. Hull served on Milligan's physician assistant feasibility study committee and was involved with program development.

The Milligan College Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies has applied for Accreditation-Provisional from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). The Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program anticipates matriculating its first class in January 2018, pending achieving Accreditation-Provisional status at the September 2017 ARC-PA meeting. Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as

planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA Standards or when a program holding accreditation-provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the Standards as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students. For more information, visit [www.arc-pa.org](http://www.arc-pa.org).

The program also is seeking accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Applications for enrollment in the M.S.P.A.S. program are due by October 1.

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MILLIGAN COLLEGE is a Christian liberal arts college in Northeast Tennessee whose vision is to change lives and shape culture through a commitment to servant leadership. The college offers more than 100 majors, minors, pre-professional degrees and concentrations in a variety of fields, along with graduate and adult degree completion programs. To learn more about Milligan College, visit [www.milligan.edu](http://www.milligan.edu) or call 800-262-8337.